

**PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM (PRRIP OR PROGRAM)**

TO: PRRIP Governance Committee (GC)
FROM: Executive Director's office (EDO)
SUBJECT: Other Species of Concern
DATE: March 1, 2022

Requested GC Action (March 2022 Quarterly Meeting)

Provide guidance on moving forward with Other Species of Concern during the Extension.

Program Background and Context

At the September 2021 GC meeting the EDO asked for GC guidance on how to address other species of concern through the First Increment Extension. This request was in response to two instances when the EDO had run into barriers on actions proposed to address the Program's Purpose B, *"When doing so will not reduce resources available to target species, the Program will also manage Program lands to benefit non-target listed species and non-listed species of concern and to reduce the likelihood of future listing. When feasible, the Program will provide regulatory certainty with respect to those non-target, listed species."* Neither the Adaptive Management Working Group, nor the Technical Advisory Committee were comfortable making decisions on what they considered to be largely political rather than technical questions.

Progress Thus Far

The GC instructed the EDO to form a working group with both species knowledge and NEPA experience to review and update federally listed, Nebraska listed, and Nebraska Tier 1 and Tier 2 species of concern. The goal of this group was to develop a short list of other species of concern for the Program to focus on during the Extension. The GC provided four criteria for prioritization:

1. Federal and/or state endangered/threatened or at high risk for future listing
2. Nexus to Program water management and/or target species
3. Distributions that overlap with the Program's AHR
4. Program actions may provide "big bang for little buck"

In response to GC guidance the EDO formed a working group comprised of the following members:

1. FWS: Matt Rabbe participant, Jeff Runge cc'd on correspondence only
2. NGPC: Michelle Koch
3. CO state and water users: Kevin Urie (SPWRAP)
4. WY water users: Jason Mead (WWDO)
5. NE water users: Dave Zorn (CNPPID)
6. Conservation groups: Andy Caven (Crane Trust)

The working group met in December to gather species information for each of the four criteria and again in January to prioritize the short list provided in **Table 1**. Identified species of concern were divided into three tiers to reflect: 1) those species for which new, relatively low-cost options could provide benefits, 2) species for which the Program already provides benefits through current management, and 3) species for which there are limited opportunities to provide benefits due to lack of information, rare occurrence, or habitat requirements that are incompatible with target species.

GC Guidance for Moving Forward

The EDO provides this short list for GC review and asks for continued guidance to move forward.

- Are there any changes to the list?
- Does the GC want to formalize the list in any way?
- Do you want the EDO and/or working group to move forward with developing management options? If so, for which species?



Table 1. PRRIP First Increment Extension non-target listed and non-listed species of concern.

Taxa	Common Name	CRITERIA MET	Federal/NE Listed or Hight Risk (Y =1; N=0)	Federal/NE Listed or At Risk Status	Program Nexus	Nexus Notes	AHR Distribution	Distribution Notes: Sources 1-NESWAP 2018; 2- USFWS; 3-NGPC; 4-Crane Trust	New, Low Cost Opportunities (Y=1; N=0)	Potential Management Actions
New Action List										
Osteichthyes	Plains Topminnow	4	1	NE Tier 1	1	Direct water link	1	1. Endemic; Central Platte River, Cherry County Wetlands, Dismal River Headwaters, Elkhorn River Headwaters, Keya Paha, Kimball Grasslands, Lower Loup Rivers, Lower Platte River, Middle Niobrara, North Platte River, Panhandle Prairies, Platte Confluence, Sandsage Prairie, Snake River, Upper Loup Rivers and Tributaries, Upper Niobrara River, Verdigris-Bazile, Wildcat Hills, Willow Creek	1	Backwater management, potential for grazing management
Insecta	Platte River Caddisfly	4	1	NE Tier 1	1	Backwater dependent	1	1. Endemic; Central Platte River	1	Backwater management, potential for grazing management
Insecta	Monarch	3	1	Federal Status being reviewed, being considered for future listing. NE Tier 1	0	No	1	1. Widespread; Statewide (highest population numbers in eastern third of state)	1	Milkweed overseeding, maintain milkweed within grasslands
Insecta	Regal Fritillary	3	1	Federal Status being reviewed, being considered for future listing. NE Tier 1	0	No	1	1. Widespread; Statewide (primarily in the eastern half of the state)	1	Violet planting, appropriate grazing/burning management
Current Program Actions Provide Benefits										
Aves	Sandhill Crane	2	0	NE Tier 2	1	Water and WC link	1	Central Platte River	already providing	WC habitat management
Aves	Bald Eagle	2	0	NE Tier 2	1	Direct water link	1	Central Platte River	already providing	Considered under current land management plans; monitoring of eagle nests and observing buffers
Mammalia	North American River Otter	2	0	Neither federal/state listed or at risk	1	Direct water link	1	Central Platte River	already providing	Considered under current land management plans
Reptilia	Smooth Green Snake	1	0	NE Tier 2	0	No	1	4. Central Platte River; Disjunct/fragmented/isolated breeding population	already providing	Grazing management
Osteichthyes	Plains Minnow	3	1	NE Tier 1	1	Direct water link	1	1. Limited; Central Platte River, Lower Loup River, Lower Platte River	already providing	Program flow releases in central Platte River, potential backwater management
Osteichthyes	Western Silvery Minnow	3	1	NE Tier 1	1	Direct water link	1	1. Limited; Central Platte River, Lower Loup River, Lower Platte River	already providing	Program flow releases in central Platte River, potential backwater management
Aves	Short-eared Owl	2.5	1	NE Tier 1	0.5	Extension with wet meadow focus; mesic prairie, wet meadow habitat	1	1. Widespread; Central Loess Hills, Cherry County Wetlands, Dismal River Headwaters, Sandhills Alkaline Lakes, Sandsage Prairie; 4. Recorded for AHR by Crane Trust	already providing	Grazing mangement (barb wire strikes as potential threat)
Insecta	Southern Plains Bumble Bee	2	1	NE Tier 1	0	No	1	1. Widespread; Western two-thirds of state; Cherry County Wetlands; 4. Recorded for AHR by Crane Trust	already providing	High diversity grasslands; targeted noxious weed spraying
Insecta	American Bumble Bee	2	1	Federal Status being reviewed, being considered for future listing. Not on NE list.	0	No	1	4. Recorded for AHR by Crane Trust	already providing	High diversity grasslands; targeted noxious weed spraying
Aves	Swamp Sparrow	1.5	0	NE Tier 2	0.5	Extension with wet meadow focus; mesic prairie, wet meadow habitat	1	4. Recorded for AHR by Crane Trust (on SW edge of breeding range)	already providing	Wet meadow management
Aves	Henslow's Sparrow	2	1	NE Tier 1	0	No	1	1. Limited; Central Platte River	already providing	Grassland management
Osteichthyes	Sturgeon Chub	2.5	1	Federal Status being reviewed, being considered for future listing. NE Tier 1	0.5	Direct water link, lower Platte distribution	1	1. Distribution limited; Lower Platte River, Missouri River; 2. According to 2021-2022 SSA, entire Platte is within the historical range, current range enters the Platte at MO confluence and passes Elkhorn but does not reach the Loup; 3. NGPC has 1979 historic records in AHR; 4. Legacy data from Trust has 1989 last capture record in AHR	already providing	Program flow releases in central Platte River
Important Species but Limited Opportunities to Provide Benefits										
Plantae	Western Prairie Fringed Orchid	2.5	1	Federally threatened. NESCA listed. NE Tier 1	0.5	Extension with wet meadow focus; mesic prairie, wet meadow habitat	1	1. Limited; Central Platte River, Cherry County Wetlands, Elkhorn River Headwaters, Lower Platte River, Upper Loup Rivers and Tributaries, Willow Creek Prairies	0	Rare occurrence limits ability to provide benefits
Mammalia	Northern Long-Eared Bat	2	1	Federally threatened. NESCA listed. NE Tier 1	0	No	1	1. Widespread; Northern half and eastern third of state; Pine Ridge, Upper Niobrara River, Middle Niobrara River, Lower Niobrara River, Verdigre-Bazile, Ponca Bluffs, Missouri River, Indian Cave Bluffs, Rulo Bluffs, Southeast Prairies, Sandstone Prairies; 2. FWS assumes range within AHR	0	Reliance on wooded habitat is in direct conflict with target species
Insecta	Winnebago Mayfly	3	1	NE Tier 1	1	Water dependent life cycles	1	1. Limited; Upper Niobrara River, Central Platte River, Lower Loup Rivers	0	Little known about this species to direct potential management actions.
Osteichthyes	Northern Redbelly Dace	2	1	NESCA listed. NE Tier 1	1	Direct water link	0	1. Disjunct; Cherry County Wetlands, Keya Paha, Middle Niobrara , Panhandle Prairies, Platte Confluence, Snake River, Upper Loup Rivers and Tributaries, Upper Niobrara River	0	Not registered to occur within AHR
Reptilia	Red-bellied Snake	2.5	1	NE Tier 1	0.5	Extension with wet meadow focus; mesic prairie, wet meadow and wet riparian habitat dependent	1	1. Disjunct; Central Platte River	0	Little known about this species to direct potential management actions.